

CHAPTER X

Adyar — Mme. Blavatsky and her confession — The Theosophists — An American receiving the Buddhist *pansala* — The attempted fraud on the Broughtons — Letter of Commissioner Broughton — Origin of Koothoomi — Revelations of Mme. Coulomb.

WHEN Mme. Blavatsky was on her way from New York to India she stopped for some days in London, and my wife and I were invited to meet her at the house of Mr. and Mrs. William Tebb. Mrs. Conway was not attracted by her, but I found her entertaining. She had nothing that could be described as culture; and though the work, "Isis Unveiled," ascribed to her, was without value to me so far as I read it, I have never believed she could write anything so elaborate. In fact, though Mme. Blavatsky was entertaining, it was because of her gossip knowledge of contemporary persons and events. Such at any rate was the kind of conversation she carried on with myself, and I wondered how my thoughtful friends, the Tebbs, could take her so seriously.

After a time reports came from India of Mme. Blavatsky's new religion called Theosophy, and of her miracles. Marion Crawford introduced a mysterious "Mahatma" into his romance, "Mr. Isaacs," and was proudly claimed by Theosophists (whom, however, and their wonders he ridiculed in conversation on my mentioning the matter). At length Mr. Sinnett came to London from India as an apostle of the new faith, of which he gave strange narratives, mostly to the *élite* gathered in fashionable drawing-rooms. I listened to several of his addresses, and after one in which he told of the wonderful Mahatmas, who

had lived for ages and were now semi-visibly revealing themselves, I had some conversation with him. I was about to go to India, and enquired whether I could find out one of the Mahatmas. He gave a start, and with a look of surprise said, "Do you mean, can you see and talk with a Mahatma as you are talking with me now?" "Yes," I replied, unconscious of my *naïveté*. "No," he answered, and went on with a nebulous explanation.

Mr. Sinnett's book, "Esoteric Buddhism," gave me an impression that Mme. Blavatsky had simply invented a new set of archangels and saints to supply that reverential fog amid which all impostures are possible. It was, however, a serious thing that such notions should infect excellent people, and it became one of my duties as a public teacher to investigate it. All the way around the world I was urged by persons of influence to examine Theosophy in India. In Sydney, Judge Windeyer, in whose house I passed several days, and who was one of the best of men, assured me that I would find the evidences of Theosophy irresistible. In the same city the late Professor John Smith said he had been impressed by his interviews with Mme. Blavatsky, and I promised him and his wife, to whom I owed much for their hospitality, that I would investigate the matter.

And thus it was that on a bright day in 1884, beginning with the elephant-headed god of wisdom at Madras, and travelling to the shrine of Doubting Didymus and his lonely priest, I proceeded to visit the high priestess of Theosophy.

The centre of the Theosophic cult is Adyar. On the gateway was written, "Headquarters of the Theosophical Society." At the entrance of the park was the dilapidated carcass of a blue pasteboard elephant, which it ap-



MADAME BLAVATSKY

peared some Madras believer had set up on a recent Theosophic anniversary. The carriage-road wound through a leafy park up to a handsome bungalow. The spacious veranda displayed every elegance, but it was unoccupied. For a few minutes my driver vainly tried to find some one about the place, and I was conscious of a half hope that no one might be at home. My arrival, however, was known : a young Babu came to bring me the "Countess" Blavatsky's welcome, and to say she would presently receive me. Next a Hindu youth of remarkable appearance — delicate, almost maidenly — advanced ; but when, in response to his greeting, I held out my hand, he said sweetly, "I cannot shake hands with you." I afterwards learned that this youth was "a lay chela," that he already possessed the power of appearing at a distance in his "astral" body, and that if he shook hands his magnetism might be impaired.

I was sorry to hear that the president, "Colonel" Olcott, was absent. He was founding a new branch of the society somewhere. The "Countess" Blavatsky was cordial, and urged my remaining till the morning. I accepted her invitation so far as the rest of the evening was concerned, and was there nearly six hours. Besides the two mentioned, there were two other native gentlemen, one of them (Norendronath Sen) known to me by reputation as editor of the "Indian Mirror." America was represented in the company by a Dr. Hartmann of Colorado. Another person present was Mr. W. T. Brown of Glasgow, a young man of pleasant manners, who told me some of his marvellous experiences ; but when I intimated that I would like to carry away some little marvel of my own experience, the reply unpleasantly recalled vain attempts made through many years to witness a verifiable spiritualistic

“phenomenon.” I was once more put off with narratives of what had occurred before I came, and predictions of what might occur if I should come again. There was a cabinet shrine in which letters were deposited and swift answers received from the wonderful Mahatmas; but when I proposed to write a note, I was informed that only a few days before the Mahatmas had forbidden any further cabinet correspondence. I said that was just my luck in such matters; wherever a miracle occurs I was always too soon or too late to see it. My experience was that of Alice in the Looking-glass,—“Jam yesterday, jam to-morrow, but never jam to-day.”

Mme. Blavatsky had been forewarned by Professor John Smith of my visit, and as a shrewd reader of thoughts saw that I regarded the new order against letters as aimed at my investigation. I was careful, however, not to say that I thought it unreasonable for the Mahatma to foreclose the cabinet test just as his omniscience knew that one was coming who needed the wonders so much more than the convinced already. My self-restraint in not pressing the point in company pleased her. Some of the young neophytes moved off the veranda and strolled meditatively under the palms. Their faces were serenely solemn; they did not talk or smile; they impressed me out there as rare plants in a nursery, that must be severally kept under glass in cold weather. These Hindu neophytes, not one of them feminine, were of wealthy families and of high caste; I was told that the handsome mansion was furnished by them. Mr. Sinnett and others in England and America were talking a good deal about great sacrifices made by the “Countess” for the sake of her cause, but I saw no trace or suggestion of martyrdom at the headquarters. The house, surrounded by a fine park, was spacious and

pretty; the long veranda was well supplied with easy chairs softly cushioned, and a table with English and American magazines and the new novels; and madame drove in her own neat carriage with fine horses, as I had grateful reason to know, having returned to Madras in it. While never regarding Mme. Blavatsky's career as inspired by desire for gain, I cannot but smile whenever I hear Theosophists talk about her movement in India as wrought by self-sacrificing devotion. Certainly there was no pretence of that kind in Mme. Blavatsky herself. She sat in her large decorated chair, in an airy white beltless gown much in the style of the midsummer dress of Russian ladies, endlessly smoking cigarettes, conversing in a free and easy way, and putting on no airs at all. Madame was not pretty, but she was a notable figure, her eyes capable of every variety of expression, and her humour always playing.

At a certain moment when we happened to be alone on the veranda madame arose and asked me to follow her. She led me through a hall and along a corridor, then up a stairway to a boudoir richly decorated. There she invited me to take a seat, and proffered a box of cigarettes, lighting one for herself. I preferred my cigar, and was ready for an apparently intended encounter. She asked what was my particular proposal or desire. I said, "I wish to find out something about the strange performances attributed to you. I hear of your drawing teapots from under your chair, taking brooches out of flowers, and of other miracles. If such things really occur I desire to know it, and to give a testimony to my people in London in favour of Theosophy. What does it all mean?"

She said with a serene smile, "I will tell you, because you are a public teacher [here she added some flattery],

and you ought to know the truth : it is all glamour — people think they see what they do not see — that is the whole of it.”

It was impossible not to admire the art of this confession. Mme. Blavatsky, forewarned by Professor John Smith of my intended investigation, had arranged precisely the one manœuvre that could thwart it. Had I continued it, cross-examining her adherents, proposing plans for verification, I might have awakened doubts and suspicions among her “neophytes.” But she spiked my guns ; her confession was made without witnesses, and should I use it publicly it was easy enough to say I had misunderstood her. And moreover she had used the vague word “glamour,” which might preserve her personal throne while giving up the reality of the things attested by her miracles.

I did not press the matter at all. I felt that madame was a genius in her way, and a moral phenomenon to be studied, but she made no pretences with me. Of the common Theosophic talk about a new era, welfare of humanity, reincarnation, there was no trace whatever. Not a word about “Occultism” or any other “ism” came from her, nor anything in the way of an abstraction. She gossiped wittily and sometimes satirically about this or that person she had met in America, London, Paris, and told amusing anecdotes.

About seven a signal for dinner interrupted the boudoir interview. There were seven or eight at the large round table, all of us whites. The dinner was excellent, but one or two of the young men did not eat the meat. Mme. Blavatsky ate little and smoked most of the time. In the talk, which was all about Theosophic marvels, Mme. Blavatsky did not participate except with some such remark as, “There, Mr. Conway, what can be said

of such events?" etc. She limited herself to mild interjections, but meantime exchanging with me humorous looks; for the situation was indeed amusing.

There was at the table a woman to whom I was not introduced, but whom I remarked because she did not say a word nor even smile during the meal, and I thought watched me closely.

There were named three Mahatmas in the Blavatsky system: Koothoomi, Morya, and Djual Khoot. I strongly suspect the latter to be another of Mme. Blavatsky's jokes. Having created the imaginary Koothoomi (originally Kothume) by piecing together parts of the names of her two chief disciples, Olcott and Hume, that success probably led her to create another Mahatma,—a second Cott (Olcott) travestied as a dual or Djual Khoot.

After dinner the young men were all eager to have me go into the sacred room, though Mme. Blavatsky was rather reluctant. It was a small room and its only furniture the so-called "shrine,"—really a cabinet such as Spiritualists ordinarily use, though smaller, and such as Mme. Blavatsky herself probably used when a spirit-rapping medium in America. The only persons I remember present besides Mme. Blavatsky were two young Hindus, and on entering they instantly prostrated themselves on the floor, flat on their stomachs, burying their eyes under folded hands. It occurred to me that I myself could perform miracles among such witnesses. Madame stood with an amused smile looking from the neophytes to me. She then opened the doors of the cabinet, which was about five feet high by four wide. It was tastefully decorated, and when opened richly wrought metal was disclosed. In it sat a small Buddha, and on each side, in frames about seven inches high, a picture. These were of two light-brown

persons, the chief "Mahatmas," done by some process said to be occult. The portrait of "Koothoomi" was, I feel sure, from one of Rammohun Roy made in London by my old friend James Philp. A copy of the portrait of that famous founder of Brahmo theism, given me by Franklin Philp in Washington, had been on my wall thirty years before I saw him faked up as "Koothoomi," with a praying machine on his head. The other Mahatma in the cabinet was Morya, who seemed to be a Rajah from some sacred picture, perhaps a manipulated Rama. I again proposed to leave a letter to one of the Mahatmas, but madame shrugged her shoulders and closed the cabinet.

When we had returned to the veranda most of the young men declared they had at times seen Koothoomi. Knowing well that Koothoomi was a name twisted from Ol[cott-Hume], and that no such being existed, I still did not question the good faith of these young men; but I quietly cross-examined them, without seeming to do so, and found that they had seen him generally in his "astral" body. Three thought they had seen him once in his physical body, but their testimony was unsatisfactory, especially as I had observed in the sacred room their method of observing things with their eyes close to the floor. Mr. Brown of Glasgow was candid in his narrative of his three meetings with Koothoomi. On the first occasion he said he was so overwhelmed with awe that he "could not look upon him." On the next occasion the Mahatma was at some little distance, his head and lower face being covered after the manner of sacred Rajahs. On the last occasion it was at night, Mr. Brown being in bed, and he only knew that he had been with Koothoomi by a handkerchief marked "K. H." slipped into his hand with a letter. It was evident that Mr. Brown was sincere,

and also that he had no perception of the nature of evidence. Several of the letters received from "K. H." were shown me; they were the merest commonplace notes, without any value whatever unless read with occult emotions.

When I left in the evening for Madras, Madame Blavatsky said merrily that she would make me an "astral" visit in London. I reminded her that I had in the morning looked with doubt on the footprint of St. Thomas, the disciple who would not believe in the existence of his Mahatma without touching him, and that his sceptical spirit is still in the earth.

I was surprised next morning, when we were out at sea on the Teheran to find on board Norendronath Sen, whom I had seen at Adyar, still more to hear from him that while I was in the presence of the cabinet a "sign" had been given of which I took no notice. The young men had told him that when I entered the room a bell rang in a place where there was no bell. I remarked only that it was unaccountable that my attention should not have been called to it at the time. This Mr. Sen, of the "Indian Mirror," was a relative of the Brahmo leader, Keshub Chunder Sen. That he did not have perfect faith in the Theosophic miracles was evident to me from the fact of his expressing regret that the movement should be permitted to be anything more than an ethical and religious reformation. He rather complained of myself and others who were interested only in the "signs and wonders," being thus the means of preventing Theosophy from developing into the great Reformed Religion of India. He was an intelligent man, and I received from him a clear idea of the causes which had given so-called Theosophy its success. While Madame Blavatsky had, in my opinion,

no real interest in the moral and religious "regeneration" of India, and would I think have sympathized with my own dislike of the Christianizing propaganda, these scholarly Hindus were dreaming of an ideal religion built out of their own history and literature. And it was an event whose importance we western people can hardly comprehend when there appeared from America this company of people who had abandoned every form of Christianity, taken up their abode in India to lead in the work of at once rehabilitating and revising these ancient systems, and pointed Hindus and Buddhists to their own scriptures and prophets as fountains of faith and hope. They naturally gained a hold on the hearts of these people, and in a few years moved and attracted them more than did the Christian missionaries in as many centuries.

I have spoken of Dr. Hartmann of Colorado. In Colombo the chief priest Sumangala told me he had received from "Colonel" Olcott of New York a request for "permission" to administer *pansala* to Dr. Hartmann, and had granted it. *Pansala* means the five precepts of Buddhism, and their administration to any individual means his initiation into the higher grade of Buddhism. This ceremony had been performed in Madras by "Colonel" Olcott. In the midst of a circle of devout oriental people stood these two Americans. The one repeated, the other responded to, the ancient and solemn formula, "I take refuge in Buddha! I take refuge in religion! I take refuge in truth!" Before the assembly Dr. Hartmann pledged his honour to observe the five precepts, — to abstain from theft; to abstain from lying; to abstain from taking life; to abstain from intoxicating drinks; to abstain from adultery. The spectacle, two Americans abandoning Christianity and adopting an

oriental religion, touched the Hindu imagination. It was unique, even among the anomalies of theological history.

But Mme. Blavatsky was not a woman of imagination, she was a woman of the world. It is said that she ran away from her Russian home in girlhood to travel with a circus, and she appeared to me as an actress trained by many adventures to a morbid desire to sway men. Without beauty, she made the most of her wit, and had managed to get a few able men to commit themselves to her magical pretensions. Possibly she possessed some of the power now called "hypnotic." When I met Mrs. Anne Besant, whom I had so long known as a freethinker, after her conversion to Theosophy, I told her what Mme. Blavatsky had said to me about its being all "glamour." Mrs. Besant said that "glamour" implied a good deal; to make one see a person in one's room, even if there was no person there, was a marvellous power. But she thought I must have been mistaken in thinking madame had added "that is the whole of it."

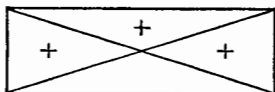
Mme. Blavatsky's fault as a thaumaturgist was too great eagerness to capture distinguished people. I was told at Bombay that she had to give up her residence there by the exposure of her effort to deceive the prince (now Edward VII), and a daring attempt at fraud in 1882 no doubt led to her leaving Calcutta. About this latter affair I was able to ascertain the facts.

I had brought a letter of introduction from a leading barrister in London, Charles C. Macrae, to an eminent English official in Calcutta, Commissioner Broughton, who with his wife, a lady distinguished in society, were persons whom Mme. Blavatsky naturally desired to have in her train. Mr. Broughton told me the story of the collusion between Mme. Blavatsky and Mr. Eglinton

(a London "medium," who had been holding séances in Calcutta) to impose on his wife and himself. The facts were subsequently written for me in detail by him and are curious enough to be placed on record in the Blavatsky annals.

3 OUTRAM ST., CALCUTTA.

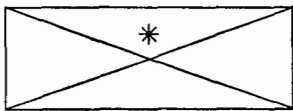
MY DEAR SIR,—I am happy to tell you all I know about the letter said to have been brought from the Vega, and as some of the passengers are now here I showed your letter to them, and enclose their respective accounts. My wife is in Europe, and may write to you herself. I have sent these letters to her, with your own. With regard to my own knowledge of the transaction, I was in Calcutta, and a friend was staying with me,—Mr. H. Blanford, a Fellow of the Royal Society and head of the Meteorological Department, a practical man, not I think disposed to judge wrongly one way or the other. We both know Mrs. Gordon, the lady to whom Mr. Eglinton wrote, or says he wrote, from the Vega while at sea, and I am on friendly terms with her, as is Mr. Blanford, to the best of my belief. She called at my house a day or two after the Vega had left Colombo, and produced a letter, an envelope, and two or three cards. The letter was from Mr. Eglinton; it was not in the envelope, but was attached to it by a string in the corner, which was also passed through the corners of the cards. These cards had writing upon them, which we were told was the writing of Mme. Blavatsky, then at Poona; the writing on the cards referred to the contents of the letter. The envelope had three crosses upon it in the positions I have indicated. Mrs. Gordon stated that these letters had been



brought to her the day before by what are called "astral" means, having been conveyed from the Vega — then on the way from Colombo to Aden — first to Poona, and then from Poona to her residence in Hourah, a suburb of Calcutta. I have not the slightest doubt that Mrs. Gordon firmly believed this, and I am under the impression that she believes it still, but I have not had the pleasure of meeting her for some time. Mr. Blanford and I, however, ventured to ask a few gentlemen as to the circumstances under which the letters made their appearance at Hourah, and the replies led us to form an opinion that the lady might have been imposed upon.

The circumstances, which were, I believe, considered to amount to strong proof in favour of the "astral" theory, were published in a paper called the "Psychic Notes," which for a short period in that year had been published, I think weekly, in Calcutta.

I wrote to my wife, and sent this account, substantially as I have now stated it, to her; and she replied that Mr. Eglinton had brought a letter to her to be marked, that it had a cross upon it, that she was asked to mark another or others, and that she did so, crossing the first cross in this manner. I will add that when my wife left Calcutta I accompanied her,



with some other passengers, in a steam launch, and she embarked on board the Vega at Diamond Harbour or thereabouts, some hours' run from Calcutta. I was the bearer of a letter to Mr. Eglinton. It was given to me for him by Mrs. Gordon, I think, but I won't be positive, and of course I do not know by whom it was written. I gave it to Mr. Eglinton, who was playing a rubber in the smoking-room when we arrived

at the ship. I took leave of him, and have never seen him since. I had known Mr. Eglinton; he was in the habit, when in Calcutta, of giving exhibitions of his powers at private houses for a fee. He generally dined at the house, and the company afterwards adjourned to a darkened room, where musical-boxes played and tambourines were thumped by, as it was said, mysterious agencies. He came to our house in this way, but nothing occurred. I think he considered it a failure.

Mr. Sinnett we do not know.

I am, yours faithfully,

L. P. DELVES BROUGHTON.

Mrs. Broughton says in her letter (October 24, 1885): "When Mr. Eglinton brought me the envelope it had one cross upon it, and I said in a vague way, 'Let me see, how shall I mark it?' whereupon Mr. Eglinton promptly proposed I should make a second cross + + so, which naturally decided me not to do so, and no doubt in this consisted 'the bad behaviour' Mr. Sinnett spoke to you of. As Mr. Eglinton found occasion to open the envelope I had marked, it seems singular he should not have found it worth while to tell me he had done so. He made an unfortunate mistake in referring the matter to me at all, as he did not find me the pliable being he expected!"

Mrs. Broughton was travelling to London with friends, — Mr. and Mrs. W. K. Eddis and Mr. A. Wilson. Letters from these gentlemen were enclosed to me by the Broughtons. They were elicited by my report to them of an explanation sent me by my friend Mrs. Caroline Gordon, a devout Spiritualist, who before her husband (an officer) was transferred to Calcutta attended my chapel

in London. She had learned from Mr. Eglinton that after the envelope was marked by Mrs. Broughton, he concluded to enclose a note to Mme. Blavatsky in it, and put the contents into a new envelope; but it was late (why the haste?) and he could not find Mrs. Broughton, so he marked the envelope himself! Of all this, however, not a word was heard from Eglinton during the rest of the voyage,—not even when he was held up to ridicule on the *Vega*, where a letter was brought on board at Gravesend from Mr. Broughton saying that the envelope had three crosses; for the matter had been the talk of all the passengers. That Eglinton had not in any mark imitated Mrs. Broughton's asterisk Mrs. Gordon (sincere as she was credulous) ascribed to his strange ignorance of test-conditions. Eglinton was no idiot. Like Mme. Blavatsky he was an actor, and I was told that in Calcutta they affected contempt of each other's pretensions.

"My wife," writes Mr. Eddis, "was sitting by Mrs. Broughton when Eglinton read to her the letter he was going to send by astral means. Both noticed at the time that there was not one word in the letter which might not have been written in Calcutta before the steamer started,—not a single allusion to anything which had occurred since we left Colombo, which would have put suspicion out of the question." These ladies were too witty to point out to the Spiritualist this defect in his letter, and allowed him to go on digging the pit into which he and Mme. Blavatsky fell.

One evening at a dinner company at the Salisbury Hotel, London, where Mr. Sinnett was present, I asked him how he could explain that Blavatsky-Broughton incident. He answered, "It is a long story, but I can say this much: Mrs. Broughton behaved very badly."

One day when I was at the house of General Pitt Rivers in London "Colonel" Olcott called. The Hon. Mrs. Pitt Rivers, one of whose sons had been a believer in Theosophy, repeated the story of the attempted fraud on the Broughtons and asked him to explain it. "Colonel" Olcott answered, "Your question implies the possibility of a collusion between the Theosophists of India and Mr. Eglinton, and before such a suggestion I am dumb." It was the best — indeed, the only — reply that could be made, and Mrs. Pitt Rivers tried in vain to get any other. But the evasions of Sinnett and Olcott prove the truth of what Mme. Blavatsky said in a letter to Mme. Coulomb, when the latter resolved to expose her tricks, "God himself cannot take out of my hand those who believe in me."

That Mme. Blavatsky without beauty or wealth should be able to bind men to her proves that she possessed some of those "occult" qualities in which Lord Bacon finds the secret of success. I do not believe that she was characteristically crafty or shrewd. Although she had exhibited art in her confession to me, she afterwards made a blunder about it by getting a premature explanation printed in England. I had not reported or used what she said, but only had it under consideration when I saw it stated in some paper, on her authority, that the answer she gave me was what she was directed by her "Guru" to give! She was imprudent also in allowing some of the earlier signatures of the chief Mahatma, as "Kotthume," to remain in circulation after the change to "Koothoomi." One of her young disciples, Mohini, exhibited a sort of book-mark ("Kotthume") once given him by Mme. Blavatsky in a company at my house in Bedford Park, London, and unwittingly confirmed the belief that the name was made up of Olcott-Hume; the

change to "Koothoomi" having been made as a better disguise of the combination. (Sir William Hunter told me in Calcutta that in either form the name is outside all analogies of any language ever known in India.)

I repeat my conviction that Mme. Blavatsky's impostures were not for the purpose of getting money. At times she lavished all the money she had on some scheme to amaze a distinguished person or secure an influential follower.

The silent woman at the Adyar table was Mme. Coulomb, who soon after made the fatal revelations concerning Mme. Blavatsky's tricks. The French woman, I am now certain, was resolved that if any attempt to impose on me were made she would warn me. She had already ceased to be an assistant, and it is possible that Mme. Blavatsky's explanation to me, that her mysterious familiars had just forbidden further correspondence through the miraculous cabinet, was due to Mme. Coulomb's withdrawal of her connivance. The awful conflict was even then going on in secret, and I did not suspect the extent of Mme. Blavatsky's histrionic powers until the publication of her letters to her penitent accomplice revealed that during all that time when she was so serenely presiding at her table, and conversing with me so merrily, she was just over a rumbling volcano threatening every instant to burst out with ruin to her whole empire in India. However, it is more probable that Mme. Blavatsky would not in any case have attempted to convert me; she must have heard from her London friends that I was so exacting in evidence, about all such wonders, as to be a hopeless case. What she really wished was, I think, to forestall the ugly reports about her that I was likely to hear in Calcutta and Bombay, and by her personal

cordiality and hospitalities to me induce me to talk of her in a friendly way among our mutual friends in London. I was indeed in a tolerant spirit towards Spiritualism, having found so many excellent people who were made happy by it, and I regarded Theosophy as simply Spiritualism in a fez.

The letters written by Mme. Blavatsky to Mme. Coulomb to persuade her or to threaten her silence are numerous and unquestionably genuine. The French woman could no more have written anything in them than she could have written Browning's "Mr. Sludge, 'the Medium,'" and, moreover, the originals were opened to public inspection in a community where Mme. Blavatsky's peculiar handwriting was well known. It is due, I think, Mme. Coulomb's inability to have them printed anywhere except in an obscure Madras magazine, that the strange situation revealed in the correspondence has not attracted the attention of some novelist or playwright. Every sentence in the Blavatsky letters is born of a life-and-death struggle. Her alternate wrath and soft persuasiveness, her audacity and her ingenuity, reveal wonderful powers, and remind me of the ablest subtlety and invective I have ever heard at the bar.

I received from Mme. Coulomb in London a long and piteous letter showing that the publication which ended Mme. Blavatsky's thaumaturgy in India had a terrible recoil on herself. The disclosure she made was certainly conscientious. She had met Mme. Blavatsky in Cairo, I think, and being a Catholic was easily persuaded that the Theosophic miracles were genuine. She and her husband invested all the money they possessed, — a considerable sum, — and after they discovered that some things requested of them were of doubtful honesty, the two French

people had no means at all of recovering their money or of living except by receiving support at the Theosophic headquarters. Mme. Coulomb was a believer in supernaturalism; she naïvely says that she did not mind very much the deceptions worked on Hindus because they already believed such miracles, but when the frauds began to impose on English people she could not stand it.¹ The situation was thus really unique. In order to reveal the whole thing and publish all the letters that Mme. Blavatsky had written to her, poor Mme. Coulomb had to confess that she had been an accomplice, and also lose all the money that she and her husband had invested in the concern. She was thus a sort of martyr. She was reduced to pauperism, for I do not believe that the missionary magazine which published the letters paid her even a pittance for them; and what became of her I know not.

On our way from Madras to Calcutta a Sunday morning was occupied by Mr. Muller of Bristol, who had gained celebrity by carrying on a sort of religious hospital there which he claimed was supported by prayer alone. Miss Mary Carpenter and Miss Frances Power Cobbe had discovered the imposture of that claim, which indeed all intelligent people well knew, the scandal being that so many subscribers lent themselves to the pious fraud. Muller, whom I had some curiosity to see, preached the most repulsive sermon that I ever heard. His theme was the blessing of those whose "sin is covered" (Ps. xxxii, 1),

¹ In her letter to me Mme. Coulomb bitterly complains of a gentleman who repaid her effort to save him from a deception by assisting in her ruin. "I do not think that ever since the world began there has been an impostor like Madame Blavatsky. I am not ashamed to be called a Theosophist, and would I were able to devote my time to it, but what I would like very much would be to tear out of my life the page that concerns my life with Madame Blavatsky."

and he asserted that if a man or woman were only believers in the blood of Christ, the Almighty did not see their sins at all. Whatever crimes or villainies they had done, they were entirely hidden under the name of Christ, and the all-seeing eye would never look beyond that covering. After this sermon I was conversing on deck with a number of educated Hindu gentlemen who were astounded that any preacher could talk in that way. There were three or four of these educated Hindus, and they were unanimous in the opinion that if any such doctrine as that were really to get into the mind and heart of any large number of Hindus, the amount of crime that would ensue would be unimaginable. I told them that the fruits of such preaching were already visible in England, but that fortunately very few preachers could be found even in the most ignorant conventicles to believe such stuff, and that the masses of English and American people got their morals mainly from the law courts.

To those who like myself desire to preserve and continue all the varieties of religion in their own structural development, it is a satisfaction to realize the extent to which the literalism of missionaries prevents their doing much real harm.